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ABSTRACT

In the spring of 1978, the Virginia State Library commissioned The Computer Company to conduct a feasibility study of the possibility of establishing a statewide library network for the Commonwealth of Virginia. In this report, the authors respond to that study by identifying three areas of concern for academic libraries: (1) the need for academic libraries in Virginia to acquire online circulation control systems--the development of a statewide circulation system; (2) the need to clarify the right and responsibility of academic libraries to participate in national networks--the establishment of a state policy for such participation; (3) the need for careful study and planning for the integrated library network proposed in the study--a recommendation to study, weigh, and debate the concepts and stardards essential to such a network. Attached to the report is an outline on circulation control and data base utility. (Author)

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A POSITION PAPER ON THE PROPOSED VIRGINIA INTEGRATED LIBRARY NETWORK

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the Spring of 1978, the Virginia State Library commissioned The Computer Company to conduct a feasibility study of the possibility of establishing a Statewide library network for the Commonwealth of Virginia. The report is entitled, "Integrated Library Network System for the Commonwealth of Virginia, Section I, A Feasibility Study, and Section II, Requirements and Recommendations an Addendum". This report is characterized by inconsistencies and inaccuracies, but it does present specific recommendations. It is essential that academic librarians seriously respond to the report's findings because failure to do so would give tacit approval to recommendations which could adversely affect our daily operations.

The Virginia Commonwealth University Libraries have a substantial commitment to computer based applications. These include computer literature searching, an automated circulation system, several computer based key word indexes for accessing certain library resources, and membership in the Southeastern Library Network (Solinet). Solinet membership allows participating libraries to access the OCLC Inc. national data base and utilize its services (e.g., shared cataloging module, serials check-in module). Two of these applications are of immediate concern in regard to this network study. These are the automated circulation system and the membership in the Southeastern Library network.

The automated circulation control system at VCU Libraries is a card based data collection system. The equipment used was manufactured by Mohawk Data Systems. The equipment was designed in the middle and late 1960s and was marketed for some period of time up to about 1973. It is now obsolete and the libraries face a situation where there is a critical need for a new system. The operating equipment is wearing out and we are experiencing an ever increasing frequency of breakdowns. These breakdowns fluctuate from five minutes up to several hours causing great inconvenience to the circulation operation of the libraries.

The membership in the Southeastern Library Network caused VCU Libraries to consolidate its order and cataloging functions into a Central Processing Division. As OCLC through Solinet offers each new module, VCU Libraries utilizing its system evaluation capability thoroughly reviews each new application as to its effectiveness in meeting our needs. The Computer Company's network feasibility study impacts upon these current operations and all future

plans of the libraries. We know that other academic libraries in the Commonwealth also have similar plans upon which this report will impact. Therefore, this position paper is prepared as a basis for discussion, for reasoning, and for arriving at a conclusion which is satisfactory to the State academic libraries.

II. RECOMMENDATION FOR STATEWIDE ADOPTION OF A CIRCULATION BASED NETWORK SYSTEM

We define a state of the art circulation system as including inventory, location, interlibrary loan capability, charge-in/charge-out capability and other features which are customary to today's modern on-line computer based circulation systems. After reading both parts of this study, we note that The Computer Company network report addendum begins with the development of a major statewide data base, but in the lead off sentence on Page 27, we read as follows: "at this point in the planning of an integrated library system, it is uncertain from which base the network will develop." This element of uncertainty characterizes this entire report, and it is here that our initiative should begin. The main body of the study states that circulation related problems are the most critical for many libraries. Resolution of these problems should be our prime objective. Our recommendation is that Virginia libraries begin with resolution of the circulation problem and all that is associated with it by developing an immediate plan for statewide adoption of a circulation system upon which we can build a network.

The TCC Report seems to offer three possibilities:

1. The adoption of the VPI Circulation Finding System, based on a Hewlett Packard 3000 Mini-Computer. This is a self-developed system, however, on Page 3.18 of the study it is stated that the cost of the VPI system is quite high when compared to the cost of other computer systems with the same capabilities.

2. Adopt another self-developed system. A self-developed system implies that we would adopt a system and develop programs (i.e., software to fit that system) this would involve duplicating work already done at VPI using another manufacturer's mini-computer and another equipment configuration.

3. Purchase a commercial system selected from those available on the market. This is described in the addendum on Page 102 as being a virtual impossibility, if starting from the concept of a large statewide data base. We should note, however, that this is feasible. Professional literature supports this conclusion. It is possible to develop the type of circulation network that we are considering here based entirely on commercial systems (e.g., turn key systems).

In discussing the development of this circulation system The Computer Company report recommends a satellite processing configuration (i.e., operating and computer storage capabilities). These satellites would be installed at different locations in the State, and area libraries would be connected. Our recommendation is that Virginia libraries consider local applications and have these interconnected when it becomes advantageous, (i.e., permit each of the academic institutions to acquire its own system). There are very distinct advantages to locally based circulation systems and we must emphasize these. By interconnecting institutional systems we will gain the advantage of quick access for interlibrary loan. We should note, however, that Solinet members will soon have interlibrary loan capability. We will not only have access to collections of libraries within the State, which are members of Solinet, but also outside the State. A circulation network offers the advantage of quick bibliographic access. We need to determine as quickly as possible what our options are and proceed to draft a statement for a request for proposal and make a decision within a reasonable time frame; the advantages of beginning from a circulation system data base are numerous. We could achieve a workable solution of our local problems. (Please see Attachment A) The circulation transaction volume of Virginia academic libraries is increasing significantly. Academic libraries need the advantages of on-line automated control now. The experience of our colleagues can serve us well as an example. A number of states are converting to statewide circulation systems, without going through the tedious and time consuming labor of developing an initial statewide data base. Many public library systems are developing such interconnected circulation systems and we should draw from this experience. Academic librarians must identify their immediate concerns for resolving the problems inherent in their present circulation systems. We must identify the objectives that we wish to achieve, (i.e., identify precisely what we expect from circulation control). When we have identified and agreed upon these objectives, we must determine which of the available systems will meet our stated requirements and solve our problems. When we have accomplished this we can make our recommendation directly to the Secretary of Education and ask that a request for proposal be drafted and action taken so that our initial objective of a statewide circulation system network can be achieved.

III. THE CASE FOR PARTICIPATION IN A NATIONAL NETWORK

Virginia libraries are not self sufficient in library holdings. This is a particularly critical factor for academic libraries which must support increasingly demanding curricular and research service loads. All of Virginia's libraries, combined together, are not capable of supporting all of the demands for library materials which are made upon them in the course of their daily activity. There is strong dependency on the National libraries, and there is strong dependency on an interlibrary

loan program involving libraries outside the borders of Virginia. At this time there are two major national data bases, OCLC Inc. and Research Libraries Information Network (formerly BALLOTS) both of which have great potential. OCLC Inc. and RLIN seem to meet the requirements of most of the nation's libraries. We believe that the advantages of a national data base out-weigh those of local data bases for academic libraries. A statewide data base solves very few problems for academic libraries within that State. Considering the different missions of each of our colleges and universities in Virginia, we see immediately that there are few or no advantages for interlibrary loan of specialized items. There are few or no cooperative cataloging advantages for the handling of unique and specialized acquisitions. There are few or no advantages for sharing resources of expensive and unique items. There is no opportunity to participate in a meaningful way in National collection development plans, because there is no way in a statewide data base to link the collecting activities of one State's library or one research library within a State to that of others outside the State economically. A National collection development plan for the acquisition of selected foreign materials is very difficult to monitor without the advantage of participation in a National data base.

Virginia academic libraries must have a statewide policy that states that participatory membership in a national network is permitted, encouraged, and expected for those libraries requiring it.

As our institutions expand and develop their curricular and research programs, our libraries must keep pace. We cannot do that without participation in a national network. We cannot support curricular and research requirements without making a large body of resources available. It appears impossible to become self sufficient in terms of library resources. We must work and share our resources with other libraries on a nation-wide basis.

IV. THE NETWORK FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR AN INTEGRATED LIBRARY NETWORK WITH A STATEWIDE DATA BASE AND PROCESSING SYSTEM

This feasibility study raises so many questions that a prohibitive amount of time will be required to resolve them. For this reason it is not practical to begin with full planning for such a system. It will take several years to bring such a concept up and operational. Even after development of an integrated library network begins, there will remain many problems to resolve. Full participation by all libraries is called for in this integrated library network. The study gave no consideration to separate development by academic

and certain research oriented libraries. There are good arguments available, of course, for a network composed of academic, public and special libraries, but there is no reason to assume that two networks could not be developed. OCLC Inc. already meets many needs for these types of libraries but the question in Virginia requires thoughtful resolution.

The study did not address the advantages of central processing for libraries of similar collecting policies (i.e., elementary, secondary schools, public libraries) nor cost differentials between commercial services and a network. It surprisingly mentioned card production when many academic and public libraries are turning first to COM catalogs and then to on-line catalogs. There is no reason to assume that low cost COM catalogs would not be an advantage to many public libraries. In this regard, economies of scale should be a prime consideration. Small public libraries could find it advantageous to share in a union COM Catalog. Once full capability for COM catalog production becomes available, there is no reason to assume that even the smallest special library would not find it advantageous to share in a COM catalog. Developing this integrated network requires a Governing Board and a staff. This need is contrary to current State policy which opposes adding new staff to State agencies. How this is to be reconciled is not discussed in the report.

It will take months of discussion to develop, validate, and establish acceptable standards for an integrated library network. Time is needed to weigh its anticipated costs against known costs for the two National networks, (i.e., OCLC and RLIN) against central processing for certain types of libraries, and commercial processing for other types of libraries where this has proven very practical in the past. Indeed, no thought has been given to whether there is a legitimate need for smaller types of libraries to participate (e.g., school libraries), in a proposed network, therefore, our recommendation is that the development of an integrated library network be given a third priority.

V. CONCLUSION

This paper presents three items for your consideration.

1. The development of a statewide circulation system.

2. The establishment of a State policy for participation in National networks.

3. A recommendation to study, weigh, and debate the concepts and standards essential to the development of a statewide integrated library network.

Thank you.

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Attachment A

Circulation Control and Data Base Utility

I. Circulation System.

A. General.

1. Circulation is chiefly local in nature

2. Functions of Inventory and Circulation control systems

a. maintain file of circulating items, to control check-ins and check-outs.

b. maintain control of on-hold items, and item renewal.

c. generation of circulation notices: holds, recalls, renewals, overdues, and fines.

d. maintain file on delinquent borrowers and the amount of fines due.

e. provide upon demand the status and location of any item in the collection.

f. provide managerial and circulation statistical reports.

g. identify delinquent patrons and items that may not circulate.

3. By-products of an automated circulation system (e.g. tapes, disks) can be used in inter-communication of bibliographic information.

4. Important: Circulation system does not equal the by-products.

5. The by-products, (e.g. tapes) can, if properly planned and produced, be used for inter-communication of some bibliographic information.

6. Requirements for use of tapes to share bibliographic information

a. format must be agreed upon

b. interchange code must be agreed upon

B. Benefits of On-line/Real-time circulation systems

1. Improved control

2. Improved statistical information

a. useful in planning

b. useful in collection development

3. Possible staffing realignment
4. Complete transactions in a shorter time frame
5. Immediate identification of delinquent borrowers, on-hold items, and items on recall

II. Local Data Base versus National Data Base

A. Problems of local data base

1. Development
2. Maintenance
3. Size of data base
4. Lack of "hits" in local data base
   a. increased local original cataloging
   b. lack of uniformity in cataloging (i.e., standards)
5. Costs
   a. developmental
   b. increased cataloging costs

B. Advantages of Local Data Base.

1. Assistance in interlibrary loans
2. Creation of statewide collection development policy
3. Assist in avoidance of unnecessary intra-and inter-regional duplications

C. Advantages of National Data Base

1. Larger data base
   a. more "hits" in the data base
   b. less original cataloging required
   c. lower cataloging costs
   d. creation of statewide collection development policy
   e. assist in avoidance of unnecessary intra-and inter-regional duplications

3. Improves out-of-state interlibrary loans

   a. OCLC is in the process of testing an interlibrary loan module

4. Virginia Commonwealth University adds Medical Subject Headings (MESH) to LC MARC format records on OCLC, i.e., our participation is therefore of national utility).